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UNHELPFUL HELPERS: FOLK-TALE VESTIGES IN THE *HOMERIC HYMNS*[*]

In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* there occur two strangely and obtrusively inconsequential episodes[1], where we find the poem's two main deities successively encountering the same anonymous old man. At vv. 87ff., Hermes, having purloined his elder brother's cattle, is driving them through Onchestus when he comes across an old fellow tending his vines by the road side. The deity addresses him (vv. 90ff.) with a covert warning not to disclose what he has seen and then moves off with the cattle. At vv. 184ff. Apollo, in hot pursuit, arrives at Onchestus, observes the same old man, and questions him (vv. 190ff.) as to whether he has noticed the cattle. The evasive reply comes back (vv. 201ff.) that it is hard to say, so many are the people who travel that particular road, but the speaker believes, though he cannot be sure (208 παῖδα δ' ἔδοξα, φέριστε, σαφὲς δ' οὐκ οἶδα, νοῆσαι), that he did see a young boy with the oxen. At which Apollo hurries off on the trail.

We would surely find these exchanges extraordinarily futile even without the provocation offered by the testimony of Antonius Liberalis *Met*. 23[2] to the existence of a variant version of events. According to this, the gods' interlocutor was not anonymous but called Battus; he was more directly bribed by Hermes not to reveal the truth; and when a disguised Hermes returned to check on him and found him ready to blab (at a price), the god

[*] In the notes that follow, 'Herter' refers to Hans Herter, *Hermes: Ursprung und Wesen eines gr. Gottes*, "Rh. Mus." 119, 1976, 193ff., 'Holland' to R. Holland, *Battos*, "Rh. Mus." 75, 1926, 156ff., and 'Radermacher' to Ludwig Radermacher's commentary on the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* ("Sitzb. d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien" 213, 1931). W. Burkert, *Sacrificio-sacrilegio: il 'trickster' fondatore*, "Studi Storici" 25, 1984, 835ff. = *Kl. Schr.* 1.179ff., though dealing with a separate aspect of the hymn from the present study (i.e. Hermes' invention of fire and sacrifice), nevertheless provides a useful introduction to the poem's numerous problems: hereafter 'Burkert'. Furthermore, esp. in the latter part of the article, 'Fontenrose' refers to J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Los Angeles 1959), and 'Small' to Jocelyn Small, *Cacus and Marsyas in Etrusco-Roman Legend* (Princeton 1982).

[1] So, for instance, S. Eitrem, "Philol." 65, 1906, 256: "die Episode hat, wie wir sie hier lesen, keine grosse Bedeutung für die Composition des Ganzen"; Holland 166: "die Episode 'Hermes und der Winzer' könnte unbeschadet des Fortgangs der Handlung fehlen, und auch das Stück 'Apollo und der Winzer' wäre ohne tieferen Eingriff entbehrlich"; Radermacher 214: "auf die Entwicklung der Dinge übt sie keinerlei Einfluss". A recent attempt to explain the old man's role, by J.S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: form and meaning in the Homeric Hymns* (Princeton 1989) 114f. strikes me as unconvincing.

[2] On which see, in particular, Holland 166ff.

turned him to stone[3]. Perhaps this variant underlies what we now find in *H.H.Herm.*

In this version too, the individual entreated to silence is an old man. Now quite independently, the sequence in *H.H.Herm.* whereby Apollo, on a quest for his cattle, encounters an old man who directs him to the goal of his search, is reminiscent of a particular folk-tale pattern. Hermann Usener[4] may have put his finger on the main issue, however surprising the consequences of his suggestion may seem at first sight: very much in passing, he identified Apollo's interlocutor with the ἅλιος γέρων, the Old Man of the Sea, a being who represents 'par excellence' the folk-tale figure of the helper. Initially this idea does indeed seem the merest speculation: what is the Old Man of the Sea doing in the middle of the country, at the side of the road, tending his vineyard?[5] Part of the answer to that question may rest with Hermes, rather than with any other character in the Hymn. Hermes is the god of the open countryside; of the road and its travellers; and of the small farmer[6]. The locale of his encounter with the helper figure is going to be determined by those factors. And if we do prefer to talk in rather more general terms of a helper figure, instead of the more specific exemplifications offered by "Old Man of the Sea" or "Wegweiser"[7], we may still be able to preserve the valuable part of Usener's intuition.

Encounters with helper figures are regularly to be found in early episodes of heroic quests, or of adventures motivated by some initial "lack"[8]. The

[3] We should not exaggerate the similarities between this account and that of the Homeric Hymn: see Radermacher 193ff. who concludes that "die beiden Erzählungen haben mehr Eigenes als Gemeinsames" (p. 194). In Ovid *Met.* 2.687ff. we get a narrative similar to Ant. Lib., where "die Abweichungen, die den Römer verraten, [sind] nicht von grossen Belange" (Radermacher 186).

[4] See "Sitzb. d. Kais. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Kl." 137, 1897, 9 = *Kl. Schr.* 4.206 n. 23. Accepted (without acknowledgement) by Radermacher, "Rh. Mus." 60, 1905, 589 n. 1.

[5] V. 188 is too textually insecure for us to be at all confident that νέμοντα is correct (δέμοντα Barnes, λέγοντα Schneidewin, *alii alia)* and, even if it is correct, that it must govern κνωδαλόν (or a form thereof) thus providing a parallel with Proteus' feeding of his herds at *Od.* 4. ("die Situation ist dieselbe" Usener declared: he later (see the reprint in *Kl. Schr.*) preferred the interpretation whereby νέμοντα governs ἔρκος).

[6] See Hester 226 ("das eigentliche Reiche des Hermes war nach allem das offene Land", 209 (on such epithets as ὅδιος and ἡγήτωρ) and 240 f.

[7] So Radermacher as cited above, n. 4 (in 1905: more cautiously by the time of his 1931 commentary, p. 193: "nicht einfach ein Wegweiser").

[8] See, for instance, Karl Meuli's notion of the "Vorabenteuer" or "preliminary adventure" (*Odyssee und Argonautika*, Berlin 1922, 101ff. = *Ges. Schr.* 2.664ff.) and Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale* (English translation, 22 and 46) on tales beginning with a "lack" which requires "liquidating" and featuring at an early stage the hero's encounter with a

original significance of the anonymous old man cannot, therefore, be decided in isolation: we need to examine the wider narrative in which he is embedded. That heroic quests of the type just mentioned often contain in disguised form the idea of a conquest of death[9] points the way to a solution.

The issues regarding the relationship between the narratives of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and of Antonius Liberalis are complex, but it has been pointed out[10] that "a Pylos is mentioned in both versions as in the neighbourhood of Hermes' cave". Burkert has rightly observed[11] that "*Pylos* è forse il toponimo più problematico della Grecia", but, if we abandon all hope of finding the right place in this world, we may actually get on the right track. R. Holland[12] saw that the name Pylos has associations with the Underworld. He merely evoked Usener's "Götternamen"[13], but a large body of evidence has materialised since, not least a correct interpretation of the *Iliad*'s picture of Heracles fighting "at Pylos amid the dead" and wounding Hades, to confirm the relevance of Pylos as seat of the Underworld[14].

Hermes is of course at home at such a locale in his roles as *psychopompos* and chthonic deity[15]. His residence in a cave also has its own propriety too, for caves exhibit all sorts of associations with Death and the Underworld[16]. The picture thus obtained of a god of death and the underworld, residing in a cave to which he transfers the cattle he has pilfered from someone else's possession, is irresistibly reminiscent of the story of Cacus and Hercules in Vergil *Aeneid* 8.190ff. The two narratives have long

"donor" or "helper" who, for instance, supplies information as to the direction the hero must follow. See further on these characters and patterns my remarks in "CQ" 48, 1988, 278 and n. 8, 282.

[9] See the article cited in the last note, 279ff., 289f.

[10] See the commentary by Allen and Sikes (London 1904) 132.

[11] P. 167 = 182f. Compare his remarks in *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Los Angeles and London 1979) 84 and n. 7.

[12] P. 165f. (The same deduction from the name Pylos had already been drawn by K. Kuiper, "Mnemos." 38, 1910, 34f.). Holland stresses particularly the references to an asphodel meadow in vv. 221 and 344.

[13] *Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der relig. Begriffsbildung* (Frankfurt 1948[3]) 361 n. 27, a discussion of the application of such epithets as πολύξενος to Hades (see below, n. 32) which happens to cite Soph. *OC* 1570 ἐν πύλαισι ταῖσι πολυξένοις (Musgrave: –ξέστοις) describing Cerberus' lair.

[14] See, for instance, on *Il.* 5.395-404. M.P. Nilsson, *The Mycenean Origins of Greek Mythology* (Los Angeles 1932) 203f.; Fontenrose 327-30; G. Nagy, "HSCP" 77, 1973, 139f. On Hes. fr. 33 M.-W. and the tradition of Heracles' killing of Periclymenus king of *Pylos* see Fontenrose as cited; Burkert's *Structure and History* (above, n. 11) 86 and my remarks in "SIFC" 3, 2005).

[15] See Herter 217ff.

[16] See the article cited above (n. 8) p. 281 and n. 23.

been associated anyway[17], because of the similarity between the precautions adopted by each thief to preempt detection: "only Cacus, of all the classical cattle thieves, steals cattle in the same way Hermes does"[18]. The figures of Cacus and Hermes are, in fact, surprisingly similar[19], especially if we direct our gaze to the extra-Vergilian tradition.

For instance, Cassius Hemina fr. 5 Beck-Walter refers to Cacus as "clever" (*versutus,* the very word used to translate πολύτροπος in Livius Andronicus' rendering of *Od*. 1.1), though in "iniquity" (*nequitiae*), and Hermes is described near the start of the *Homeric Hymn* (v. 13) as πολύτροπος and αἰμυλομήτης. Cacus thus has some of the characteristics of the trickster. Cacus also appears in Etruscan art as a seer and "as a handsome youth with flowing locks who plays the lyre, ... most closely resembles Apollo". Further, Cacus has been interpreted as a chthonic deity, as, of course, has Hermes[20].

Nevertheless, Vergil's presentation of Cacus is very important. What Hercules does in Vergil on learning of Cacus' theft is to track down the perpetrator and burst into the dark dungeon of his cave. The simile Vergil uses to convey the effect of light breaking in on the gloom here (243ff.: *non secus ac si qua penitus vi terra dehiscens / infernas reseret sedes et regna recludat / pallida, dis invisa, superque immane barathrum / cernatur, trepident immiso lumine manes)* merely confirms what we should have always guessed, that the story represents another *katabasis* of the hero. Once again he descends to the Underworld – to rescue human souls, in a manner that reminds us of the myth of Christ's harrowing of Hell[21]. That Geryon's cattle symbolise the spirits of the dead[22] can be shown quite independently of anything in the story of Cacus, principally by reference to the surviving vestiges of that primeval figure the Herdsman of the Dead in two characters featuring earlier on in the story: Nereus, the helper of Heracles in this particular labour, and

[17] Cf. D.F. Sutton, "CQ" 37, 1977, 392.

[18] Small 12, at the end of a discussion of the various similarities between Cacus and Hermes.

[19] For Cacus as trickster cf. Small 10 and for Hermes' shared qualities with that folk-tale figure see Burkert, *passim*. For Cacus as seer and handsome youth see Small 10ff., and for him as chthonic deity see the bibliography in Small 33 n.102, who is wrong to resist the idea. For ancient rivalry between Cacus and Apollo over augury (a rivalry finally resolved by Augustus' support for Palatine Apollo) see Small 103f. and 108. For Hermes' association with prophecy and lyre-playing see Herter 233ff.

[20] See n. 15.

[21] See my article p. 289f.

[22] The same interpretation of Apollo's cattle as stolen by Hermes was advanced by Kuiper (n. 12).

Geryon himself[23].

Cacus, then, the "Evil One" personified, steals human souls from Heracles, who had himself rescued them from their grim master the Herdsman of the Dead. And Hermes, ψυχομομπός and χθόνιος, appropriately pilfers human souls from... his brother Apollo, who on the face of it has nothing in common either with Heracles or with Geryon. However, he is associated with the Sun[24], and the cattle of the Sun can frequently be identified in related stories of cattle-rustling[25]. The cattle of the Sun are best known from *Od*. 12.320ff.[26], but versions of them that are more relevant to our present enquiry are those of the significantly named Augeas[27], which again involve a labour of Heracles; and the flock at Apollonia – another significant name – "where the route from the Hyperboreans... meets the Greek world"[28]. The Sun has connections with Geryon's cattle too: Heracles uses his gold cup to transport them[29].

But this is by no means all. We must now turn to another cluster of considerations, analysis of which will bring the cattle of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* much closer to those of Geryon, and Apollo much nearer to Heracles. For one more set of cattle with which the god is associated are those belonging to his friend Admetus, whom Apollo served as herdsman for a set period while expiating a crime committed earlier[30]. Now it has plausibly been suggested[31] that Admetus originally signified "the invincible, a form of

[23] See the article cited in n. 8, p. 284.

[24] For the earliest evidence of this see Diggle on Eur. *Phaeth*. 225 (p. 147f.).

[25] See the book by Burkert cited above, n. 11, p. 93f.

[26] Cf. S.S. Shelmerdine, "TAPA" 116, 1986, 49ff. on the similarities between the Odyssean passage and *H.H.Herm*.

[27] See my remarks in the article cited in n. 8, p. 288f. Pausanias 10.25.5 mentions an Admetus who is son of an Augeas.

[28] Burkert's book (n. 11), p. 94. Apollo's winter absence from Delphi was connected with the killing of the Cyclopes (below, n. 30). According to Eratosthenes *Catast*. 29, Apollo hid the arrow used for this among the Hyperboreans and only returned it when Zeus absolved him of murder and released him from servitude to Admetus. See Fontenrose 383: "this testimony brings together the Hyperborean land and Admetus' realm, to either of which Apollo went after killing the Cyclopes". Cf. Fontenrose 386f. for the possibility that the land of the Hyperboreans is "part of the death real".

[29] See the article cited in n. 8, 280 and nn. As I point out in "Prometheus" 18, 1992, 223f., Heracles in the far West with the Sun's bowl was once interpreted as a "solar hero", and the story of Hermes' theft of Apollo's cattle was once likewise "assigned by the 'solar' school of mythologists to the stock of Indo-European stories belonging to the undivided Aryan race" (Allen and Sikes as quoted above, n. 10, 130).

[30] The crime is variously identified as murder of Python or of the Cyclopes: see Fontenrose 87 and n. 35. Cf. n. 28 above.

[31] Fontenrose 87. For earlier versions of this hypothesis see Momigliano, "La Cultura" 2,

Hades, ... Apollo's servitude means his sojourn among the dead". The identification may initially baffle, given the plot of Euripides' *Alcestis,* but the scholar whom I have just quoted went on to argue that "in the fusion of tales that produced the classical Alcestis myth the Admetus who is keeper of the hostelry of death becomes fused with the husband of Alcestis, the self-sacrificing bride"[32]. In the *Homeric Hymn* Apollo's cattle are stolen from Pieria, to the north of Mt. Olympus, in the region of Thessaly where Admetus was king.

If Admetus, then, was originally a god of death and the dead, many of the immediately preceding details leap into sharper focus: Heracles, robbed by the death-demon Cacus of some of the cattle originally belonging to Geryon, lord of the dead, is even more closely parallel to Apollo, robbed by the death-demon Hermes, of some of the cattle originally belonging to Admetus, lord of the dead; the cattle in each case symbolising human souls. And the parts assigned to Apollo and Heracles respectively in these stories remind us of other equivalences between the two in other, related, narratives.

For instance, in the Euripidean pro-satyr play mentioned above, Apollo and Heracles feature as having successively and respectively rescued a mortal and then his wife, Admetus and then Alcestis, from the clutches of death. Or again, "when Heracles fought Thanatos to recover Alcestis, he was in servitude to Eurystheus, whose daughter or wife was called Admete. When Apollo tricked the Moirai to recover Alcestis' husband, he was in servitude to Admetus"[33]. Furthermore, both rescuing figures were temporary slaves because they were expiating a murder. And if we shift to another story, that involving Laomedon king of Troy, a similar set of correspondences soon emerges. Apollo, together with Poseidon, acts as slave, repeating his role of herdsman for the king, while the elder god constructs the city walls (*Il.* 21.448)[34]. When the two are cheated out of their pay, the former sends a plague, the latter a sea-monster to which virgins must be sacrificed. One of these virgins, Hesione, Laomedon's daughter, is rescued by Heracles in a story which can independently be proved[35] to be another version of an heroic conquest of death. Laomedon too has every right to be considered a further

1931, 201 ff. = *Quarto Contributo alla Storia degli Studi Classici e del Mondo Antico,* 167ff., esp. n. 4.

[32] Fontenrose 325. "The hostelry of death" is associated with the notion of Hades as πολύξενος *vel sim.*: see Fontenrose 325f.; and my remarks in "CQ" 48, 1988, 288 n. 62, and "SIFC" 2, 2004, 35 n. 24.

[33] Fontenrose 302.

[34] On the divergence in details between the account of Apollo and Poseidon's activity in this passage and that in *Il.* 7.452ff. see my remarks in "CQ" 53, 2003, 40.

[35] See Fontenrose 350.

representative of that primeval figure the lord of the Dead[36].

Another area of similarity between Apollo and Heracles springs to the eye if O. Gruppe was right[37] to suppose that Apollo was originally pictured as fighting Python (son of Hera: *HHAp*. 307 etc.) immediately after his own birth. Compare Heracles' despatch, while still in his cradle, of the snakes sent by Hera. Note that both Heracles and Apollo are punished for an act of murder by a period of servitude to a lesser being (Eurystheus, Admetus) who represented originally the lord of death. While in servitude, each conquers death (Heracles in his last three labours, Apollo by rescuing Admetus).

The two stories of cattle-theft which we have been considering transpire, then, to be very similar indeed (despite surface divergences), to contain very much the same motifs, and to reflect very much the same meaning. The notion of cattle (or human souls) stolen twice, of the robber robbed, is at the very heart of this meaning: "themes are repeated: the enemy is killed twice", is how one scholar[38] has summed up the issue, and, as an epitome of Heracles' conquest of first Geryon and then Cacus, it cannot be faulted. But in the *Homeric Hymn* the same themes are put to comic use, and it is worth while pondering this difference for a little longer.

As we have seen, Heracles regains his stolen cattle by a resort to force: he invades the thief's stronghold to confront and conquer him there. Such a resolution of their dispute would suit neither the *Hymn's* Apollo[39] nor Hermes[40]. Hans Herter memorably epitomised the latter as "der Gott des Handels und Wandels"[41], and said of him "er braucht... nicht Gewalt wie Herakles oder räuberische Volksstämme, sondern kapriziert sich auf Übervor-

[36] See e.g. "SIFC" 3, 2005.

[37] *Gr. Myth. u. Religionsgesch.* (Munich 1906) 1257ff.; cf. Fontenrose 252 and 365 and Herter 231 ff. For further links between Heracles and Apollo see Fontenrose 61. Note that both are punished for an act of murder by a period of servitude to a lesser being (Eurystheus, Admetus) who represented originally the lord of death. While in servitude, each conquers death (Heracles in his last three labours, Apollo by rescuing Admetus).

[38] Fontenrose 327.

[39] Consider, for instance, his urbane refusal to engage with Poseidon in the battle of the gods at *Il*. 21.435ff. which Artemis (v. 473f.) finds so unbecoming. Cf. Fontenrose 432 n. 38: "for a less heroic Apollo we should recall the god who was willing to appease Sybaris and Heros" (for whom see Fontenrose 44f. and 102).

[40] Note the comic effect of Hermes' even more urbane declining of battle with Leto (mother of Apollo, be it stressed) at *Il*. 21.497ff. His discourse with Apollo at *Od*. 8.335ff. is also wittily urbane. Relevant here is what Fontenrose 432 says of the ambiguous roles of the two main deities in *H.H.Herm*.: "Hermes is the brigand Autolycus, cattle rustler, or is he the heroic saviour of the cattle for mankind? Apollo is the champion who recovers the stolen cattle, or is he the grim cattle lord who withholds them?".

[41] Herter 212.

teilung und Diebstahl der um so staunenswerter erscheint, je listiger er durchgeführt wird"[42]. So the dispute is settled by compromise and negotiation. But perhaps such a solution fits better the more urbane milieu of the *Homeric Hymns* as well. When Demeter was robbed of merely one heiffer[43], so to speak – her daughter Persephone, – by the god of the Underworld, she could have gone down herself to the kingdom of the dead to reclaim her. Indeed, in one version that is precisely what she did[44]. But according to the *Homeric Hymn* she chose a more diplomatic approach, pressurising Zeus to gain results, and in the end she accepts a compromise with Hades whereby she gets most, but by no means all, of what she wants.

We may continue by returning to the helper figure with whom this enquiry began, and seeing whether we cannot learn a little more about him. The story-patterns found within the tale of the rustling of Geryon's cattle have already found so many correspondences within the tale of Hermes' theft of Apollo's kine that we should linger a moment around the figure of Nereus, Old Man of the Sea: for he seems to have fulfilled the role of helper figure near the start of the relevant labour of Heracles. Such helper figures are regularly "ambivalent" in one way or another, e.g. by displaying an initial reluctance to supply aid, until forced or cajoled into doing so. An aspect of Nereus' ambivalence can be shown to reside in his role as "Doppelgänger" of Heracles' adversary Geryon, his herd of seals reflecting the latter's herd of cattle, both personifying that primitive entity the Herdsman of the dead[45]. Even if Usener was not entirely accurate in taking the *Homeric Hymn's* anonymous old man to be a further *Halios Geron,* an ambiguity can surely be detected in the evasive nature of the help he so reluctantly extends to Apollo. Characteristically of its new environment, the ambiguity is *comic:* he is clearly bearing in mind the earlier threats and promises of Hermes.

In the alternative version preserved by Antonius Liberalis, the helper's ambivalence emerges in his attitude to Hermes, who punishes it by turning Battus into a stone. Ludwig Radermacher[46], searching, like any good classical scholar, for a parallel, unearthed one in the obscure story presupposed

[42] Herter 213.

[43] For young girls described in such terms in early Greek poetry and links between the carrying off of cattle and of women see P. Walcot, "History of Religions" 18, 1979, 328ff.

[44] See N. J. Richardson's commentary on *H.H.Dem.* 305-33 (p. 259) and Index 1 s.v. "Demeter... goes to Hades".

[45] See my article (as cited in n. 8), p. 284.

[46] Radermacher 185f. It is striking that the punishments in question involve 'petrification', for, as I shall show elsewhere ("Rh. Mus." 149, 2006), the landscape in which a questing hero or equivalent encounters his helper figure is often characterised as stony. Hermes, of course, is also associated with stones: see Herter 197ff.

by Lycophron 826ff. and fleshed out by the scholion *ad loc*.[47]. According to this, Aphrodite abandoned the company of the gods in a rage and hid herself on Cyprus by Mt. Caucasus. The gods went in search of her, and Aphrodite's whereabouts were revealed by an anonymous old woman – whom Aphrodite punished by turning into stone. The story may be late, a casual and random accumulation of pre-existing motifs. On the other hand, the central "concetto" of a deity who withdraws in anger and has to be coaxed back is of extraordinary antiquity[48].

There are other parallels, which Radermacher does not cite. The first, coming as it does from the story of Cacus' pilfering of Heracles' cattle, has a particular claim upon our attention. Not everyone may be aware that Cacus had a sister, called, not altogether surprisingly, Caca[49], but a little information about her is preserved by two Latin authors[50]. Servius on Verg. *Aen*. 8.190 (2.227 Thilo-Hagen) informs us that *hunc* [i.e.*Cacum*] *soror sua eiusdem nominis prodidit: unde etiam sacellum meruit, in quo ei per virgines Vestae sacrificabatur* [*aut*] *in quo ei pervergilii igne sicut vestae sacrificabatur*. And Lactantius *div*. *inst*. 1.20.36 says *colitur et Caca, quae Herculi fecit indicium de furto boum, divinitatem consecuta quia prodidit fratrem*[51].

Here again our sources are 'late', but as one scholar[52] has put it they "must depend on an old and true tradition. Otherwise the information would be gratuitous. Cacus, having survived so well seemingly without a sister, does not suddenly need to acquire one during the late Empire, nor would authors from that period *sua sponte* create a new divinity to usurp an old

[47] Scheer (2.264).

[48] See the passages assembled by me in "ZPE" forthcoming.

[49] See Usener (as cited above, n. 13), for similar Latin pairings (Janus/Jana etc.) and cf. B. Liou-Gille, *Cultes 'Héroïques' Romains: les Fondateurs* (Paris 1980) 34ff. on *Garanus*/*Carna* as a possible example. As Usener observes, "in Greek legends it is usually the daughter, rather than, as here, the sister, who betrays her lover" ("den schätz verrät"). He is thinking of the very common pattern whereby the daughter (less often wife) of the ogre or death-demon falls in love with the hero and helps him, like Ariadne with Theseus (or Persephone with Heracles): see n. 70 below. Fontenrose 342 says of Caca's betrayal, "that she did so out of love for Heracles is clear from the tradition that he begot Latinus upon her double Fauna, the sister and wife of Faunus" (for whose association with Heracles and Geryon's cattle see Fontenrose 340). Fontenrose also (341f.) compares Antaeus' "consort Tingis who betrayed him to" Heracles, though he earlier admitted (331) "whether he took her forcefully or she had betrayed her husband for love of the hero is nowhere said". Cf. Fontenrose 113 on Syleus' daughter Xenodice whom Heracles possibly "took as his mistress after killing her father", and see my article (n. 8), 289 n. 68 on Geryon's daughter.

[50] See in general Small 32-4.

[51] The same details are reported by *Mythogr*. *Vatican*. 2.153 and 3.13.1.

[52] Small 32.

one's prerogatives". The ambivalence of this figure is obvious: she *betrays* her brother but receives divine status as a reward. The critic just quoted rightly detects[53] an at least partial analogy with the figure of Tarpeia from Livy 1.1.5-9. Tarpeia is an excellent instance of a "Wegweiser", one may add, since she meets her hero when she has gone to fetch water from a spring (1.1.6: *aquam forte... tum sacris extra moenia petitum ierat)* like Rachel in *Genesis* 29.9ff. or the anonymous princess at *Od*. 10.105ff.[54], each of whom sees to it that the men she encounters find their way to her father's house.

Mention of the "Wegweiser" at the spring conveniently brings me to the second example I wish to add. One can pardon Radermacher's failure to mention Caca, since the cattle of Geryon and Admetus initially seem to represent utterly diverse stories, and *punishment* of the informer is not mentioned. But it is odd that he overlooked the next passage, since it stands in another *Homeric Hymn*. When Apollo, in the composition dedicated to him, sets off to locate a suitable place in which to found an oracular temple – this represents his initial "lack"[55], be it noted, – he soon encounters the female figure of Telphusa *(H.H.Ap*. 244), personification of the spring of that name. He explains to her that he proposes to set up his oracle there, at which proposal she gets angry (v. 256 ἐχολώσατο) and mendaciously advises him to search out a less noisy and populous place – Crisa, for instance (v. 269). The poet adds (v. 275f.) that her motivation is to avoid competition in the matter of oracular centres. Apollo takes her advice, only to find, on arriving at the alternative locale, that there is Pytho to be dealt with – as Telphusa, no doubt, foresaw. The brute being despatched, Apollo puts two and two together and angrily returns to Telphusa (v. 377), in order to upbraid her and to take reprisal by blocking up her spring with stones (vv. 382ff.). He then establishes a centre of his own there.

Here too, then, we find the figure of the ambivalent helper, who in this Homeric Hymn has been allowed to function rather more explicitly and idiomatically than her equivalent in the *Hymn to Hermes*. In the present case, the ambivalance resides in the hidden agenda of the "Wegweiser", who guides Apollo to a destination not altogether in his best interests. A malignant motivation warps the usual efficacity of the helper's guidance. The punishment, as in the story of Battus, involves stones, though not metamorphosis as literally understood[56]. The author of the best and fullest study of Apollo's

[53] Small 32 n. 97.
[54] See Radermacher as cited above n. 4.
[55] See n. 8 above.
[56] But in fact there is no real distinction in the Hymn between Telphusa and the spring she

combat with Python[57] posed the question "whether [Telphusa] may not be a second representative of the dragoness in the Hymn", and, after an exhaustive analysis of the numerous traditions about her, answered positively: "since the nymph Telphusa turns out to be an underworld goddess, Erinys or Harpy, a double of Medusa, mate of Poseidon or Ares, mother of monsters, herself partly snake or horse (or dog), there is no difficulty in identifying her with the dragoness... as Apollo's enemy."[58] And he went on to conclude that "what the Hymn gives us... is a fusion of two local myths of Apollo's encounter with a dragon pair"[59]. All this merely goes to confirm Telphusa's status in the poem as an ambivalent helper figure. I have shown elsewhere[60] that Nereus' role in the story of Geryon's cattle is precisely analogous: not only is he the ambivalent helper with whom the hero experiences a "Vorabenteuer" or "preliminary adventure"; he is also a Dopplegänger of Geryon, so that Heracles' tussle with him prefigures or anticipates the climactic struggle against the main adversary. And in the same context, I cited[61] the Anglo-Saxon epic of *Beowulf* as supplying a very close parallel for this story-pattern whereby the poem's hero undergoes two combats, the second more difficult and climactic, first with Grendel and then, *on her own territory,* with Grendel's more formidable mother.

In my treatment, I acknowledged[62] that Fontenrose had already exploited *Beowulf* for the like comparative purpose: he saw[63] the similarity between its pattern as just cited and Apollo's hostile encounters with Telphusa and Python in the *Homeric Hymn*. More recently[64], I have cast the net of com

personifies (cf. Fontenrose 371: Apollo "found the spring, i.e. the nymph herself, charming", and for the ambiguity between spring and eponymous personifying nymph see e.g. Pind. *Ol.* 6.82-6 with Dover, "CR" 9, 1959, 195 = *Greek and the Greeks* 131). So since the spring has been "spoiled" (v. 387 ἤσχυνε) by Apollo's "shower of stones" (383 πέτρῃσι προχυτῆσιν), one is, perhaps, justified in talking of an utter change of face, i.e. metamorphosis into stone. Cadmus killed his dragon (below, n. 63) with a stone (Fontenrose 312).

[57] Fontenrose 367.

[58] Fontenrose 371.

[59] Fontenrose 373.

[60] "CQ" 38, 1988, 282.

[61] As referred to in preceding note; see now my remarks in "Prometheus" 28, 2002, 8 n. 29.

[62] See n. 61 above.

[63] Fontenrose 526. The parallel with *Beowulf* would be even closer if Telphusa were originally the *mother* of Python (and thus equivalent to the mother of Grendel). She is, by one variant, mother of the dragon whom *Cadmus* killed before founding Thebes (see Fontenrose 308). For the connection between dragons and springs see Fontenrose, Appendix 6 (pp. 545ff.).

[64] See "Rh. Mus." forthcoming.

parative analysis more widely still, by bringing in the English medieval epic known as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. That poem represents its hero, 'en route' to his climactic engagement against the Green Knight, as lodging with a mysterious but affable lord and his wife. They entertain him, and the woman finally gives Gawain a girdle that will protect him in his forthcoming encounter. At the poem's climax, it is revealed that the lord and the Green Knight are one and the same person: helper and adversary are identical[65], paradoxically enough, just as Nereus and Geryon both represent the Herdsman of the Dead (and the Green Knight too can be shown[66] to represent the power of Death).

This medieval poem can also be used to illuminate the patterns we have been tracing in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. In one respect it fits that narrative more neatly than it does the story of Heracles' cattle-rustling. For Fontenrose[67] draws our attention to one rather surprising aspect of Telphusa: "she is the alluring rather than the frightful demonness. Apollo was attracted by her lovely and pleasant surroundings (244 χῶρος ἐρατός, ἀπήμων); he found the spring, i.e. the nymph herself, charming (καλλίρροον ὕδωρ), and he wanted to stay there; but she sent him to dragon-haunted Pytho". An ambivalent helper indeed!

Now in my above summary of the plot of *Sir Gawain,* I have omitted the disconcertingly seductive behaviour of the lord's wife on the three days when, while her husband is absent hunting, she is left alone with the hero[68]. On each day she engages in amorous temptation and exacts a kiss from him. But the lord and lady are to be interpreted as acting together as one[69], and the girdle handed over to Gawain is to be read as a type of the "magical agent"[70] which the Proppian donor or helper figure frequently bestows on the hero to aid him in the quest he is embarked upon. Unexpected though it seems – as unexpected, perhaps, as Usener's identification of the old man in *H.H. Herm.,* with the *Halios Geron* – the medieval poem does appear to provide a

[65] For a similar identicality of helper and adversary in the Norse narrative of Thor's quest to Utgard see my remarks in "CQ" 38, 1988, 286.

[66] See the article cited in n. 64.

[67] Fontenrose 371.

[68] On this aspect of *Sir Gawain* see my article (n. 64).

[69] See my article.

[70] See my article. I should have noted there that not only is the girdle the equivalent of the magical agent given to the hero at his early encounter with the Proppian donor or helper figure: the lady, in her position as wife of the Green Knight, is wife to the death-demon and thus equivalent to the Persephone who helps Heracles in his twelfth labour (see n. 49 above and "SIFC" 2, 2004, 36 n. 26), and quite similar to the Ariadne who helps Theseus by giving him the thread, each at the *climax* of the quest.

parallel[71] for Telphusa's role[72] as alluringly and seductively ambivalent[73] helper figure to Apollo on his quest, the quest in both compositions being, let us remind ourselves, a conquest of the dark powers of death[74].

That reminder may serve as stepping-stone to the final point I wish to make. And it involves a return once more to the mysterious old man of the *H.H.Herm*. Picture him as he stands, liminally positioned, at the side of the road, near the cave where Hermes has stowed his cattle, and perhaps, after all, he is not so very different from the Old Man of the Sea as described by one of the first scholars to understand him: "originally one of those demons who, for the benefit of the lonely skipper in unknown seas or at the entrance to the Kingdom of the Unknown (Kingdom of the Otherworld would be a better way of putting it) must provide help so that he may travel onwards"[75].

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[71] Fontenrose 371 extrapolates the figure of a "temptress" from Telphusa (for her beauty see Fontenrose 372 n. 9; for the general role of the "seductive demonness" in tales of combat cf. *ib*. 114 and 118 ("the beautiful seductress") and theme 8 D on p. 582 "Venusberg or Siren theme"). This is interesting because, in encounters with the Proppian helper figure, the hero is often interrogated or *tested* by that figure: see Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* 39f. (cf. n. 8 above) and my remarks in "CQ" 53, 2003, 34ff., where I argue for the Judgement of Paris as having originally exemplified such a pattern. The temptress there – and elsewhere – is multiplied by three, a common folk-tale procedure: see Propp 74f. on "trebling", especially of the "donor"– precisely the figure in question.

[72] See nn. 70-71 above. On the interpretation of Telphusa here advanced, the Hymn's narrative presents "what was in origin a threefold repetition – three encounters with monsters that are essentially the same". The quotation is from Michael Swanton, *Beowulf* (Manchester 1978) 13f., referring to that poem's successive combats with Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon. In the present case, the identicality is stressed by having the figure whom Apollo encounters in the first and third episodes be one and the same nymph, just as Nereus, Geryon and Cacus all represent the same death-demon. For further explanation of this pattern, what has been called a "triad of variation", see my remarks in "Prometheus" 28, 2002, 8 n. 29.

[73] Also relevant to the double role of Telphusa (and to that of the Green Knight/lord in *Sir Gawain)* is the tale of Thor's visit to Utgard (n. 65, above), wherein one and the same person plays, in disguise, the part of the helper figure, and thereafter in *propria persona* that of the adversary. The process (by which the helper converts to enemy is frequent in folk-tale (compare the figure of Rumpelstiltskin, on whom see my observations in the article mentioned in the last note, 1ff.) and Apollo's changed attitude to Telphusa surely reflects exactly that process.

[74] See nn. 9, 20 above.

[75] F. van Duhn, *Begrüssung der 36. Philologenvers*. (1882) 121: "ursprünglich einer jenen Dämonen, welche dem einsamen Schiffer in unbekannten... Meeren oder beim Eintritt ins Reich des Unbekannten (des Jenseits wäre noch besser gesagt) ihre Hilfe spenden müssen, damit er weiter kommt".

APPENDIX

A further example of the pattern traced near the start of this article – "trickster (Cacus, Hermes) steals from the herds looked after by an individual who is not their original owner (Heracles, Apollo)" – has been detected by Dana Ferrin Sutton[76], who sees in Probus' commentary on Vergil *Georgic* 3.267 an allusion "to an otherwise unknown myth in which Sisyphus stole the horses of Diomedes [of Thrace] from Heracles as he was driving them home to Eurystheus as his eighth labour. Especially because Cacus seems to have been originally portrayed as a cunning rogue much like Sisyphus, the Cacus story looks like a Roman redaction of this myth". This would be very significant if true, since Fontenrose (not mentioned by Sutton) has observed that "the same themes and names constantly recur through the cluster of stories that group themselves about the kine of Geryon"[77].

If, however, we look more closely at the text of Probus, we find something different to what Sutton alleges. The relevant sentence is introduced with an adversative particle *(autem)* which distinguishes what follows from the preceding narrative, derived by Probus from Asclepiades of Tragilus (*FGrHist* 12 F1) and concerned with mares owned by Glaucus: *quidam autem has equas Diomedis fuisse, quas Hercules ad Eurysthea perduxerit et ab Eurystheo a Sisypho distractos, eumque filio suo* [scil. *Glauco*] *dedisse*. That is, possession of the horses passed from *Eurystheus,* not Heracles[78]. Nor is it perfectly clear that *theft* was involved. The Latin verb *distraho* nowhere, if *OLD* is to be believed, means "steal". The only attested meaning for the verb which I can fit to the present context is *OLD* s.v 4: "disperse, get rid of by sale", though even then one would have to delete the *a* before *Sisypho* to produce the sense "sold by Eurystheus to Sisyphus". This might appear to fit the immediate presuppositions of the story: Eurystheus does not seem to have been eager to keep personal possession of the animals brought back by the labouring Heracles (compare the Cretan bull, or Geryon's kine or Cerberus). According to Apollodorus 2.5.8, indeed, he simply let the horses go. Whatever the truth there, Probus' commentary supplies no parallel for the detail of Heracles or Apollo robbed of their herds by a trickster. And Sutton's deduction that the story of Cacus looks like "a Roman redaction" of a myth involving Heracles and Sisyphus loses any credibility.

[76] "CQ" 27, 1977, 392 and *The Greek Satyr Play* ("Beitr. Kl. Philol." 90, 1980) 65.

[77] P. 99. Cf. p. 345 for the Diomedes story as "a doublet of the Geryon story".

[78] One cannot emend *ab Eurystheo* to *ab Hercule,* because the preceding clause makes it clear that Heracles had brought the horses back to Eurystheus before Sisyphus became involved.

The likeliest emendation of Probus' words, however, would replace *distractas* with *detractas*[79] (cf. *OLD* s.v. *detraho* 6(a): "to take away (usually wrongly)"), though, as we have seen, there is no independent reason[80] to suppose Eurystheus was reluctant to part with the brutes.

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[79] The change is paleographically easy and may have been further encouraged by the centrality of the 'torn apart' motif to the story of Diomedes and his horses. *{dis}tractos* with a reference to the ruse shared by Cacus and Hermes (cf. Verg. *Aen*. 8.210 *cauda in speluncam tractos*, Livy 1.7.5 *caudis in speluncam traxit*) might also be a possibility had we any reason to suppose Sisyphus to have used that device.

[80] Several scholars have speculated that Probus' variant narrative derives from Euripides' satyr play *Sisyphus*: see Sutton and now Kannicht *ad loc*. (*TrGF* 5.2.658). Since this narrative preserves "the only myth that brings together Heracles and Sisyphus" (Sutton 345) and we know that the former was addressed by a character in the play (fr. 673 Kannicht), it might seem that this hypothesis supports the idea of Sisyphus robbing Heracles. But as Kannicht observes, Heracles may have appeared only at the end of the play, as a sort of *deus ex machina*.